

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 33

By Pitts

A RESOLUTION to honor the career of Davey L. Whitney, head coach of the 1961 Burt High School championship basketball team.

WHEREAS, the citizens of this great State and their elected representatives are extremely proud to honor one of the most accomplished and renowned coaches in Tennessee sports history; and

WHEREAS, Davey L. Whitney, former head coach of the men's basketball team at Burt High School in Clarksville, took the basketball program to new heights during his tenure at the school; and

WHEREAS, in 1961, Burt High School, due to segregation, was an all-African-American school, one of many which competed for the National Negro High School Basketball Championship between 1929 and 1967. The Burt Tigers made three consecutive tournament appearances from 1954 to 1956, and finished as the runner-up in the 1955 tournament before finally securing a championship win in 1961; and

WHEREAS, the pride and perseverance which legendary Coach Whitney instilled in the Tigers, along with their natural talents and abilities and their unwavering approach to team play, drove them to great success in the 1961 championship game, in which they beat the team from Webster, Louisiana, 73-70; and

WHEREAS, the 1961 team roster included players Raynell Brown, Charles Manson, Charles Gray, Kenneth Hughes, Cleotis Dinkins, Thomas Gray, L.M. Ellis, Willie Roache, Leroy Brown, and Lester Barker; and

WHEREAS, 2011 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the legendary 1961 championship win and, to commemorate the occasion, a special reception honoring Coach Whitney and the 1961 team will be held at the Customs House Museum in Clarksville on February 11, 2011; and

WHEREAS, prior to coaching at Burt High School, Davey Whitney had a distinguished athletic career. The Midway, Kentucky native attended Kentucky State University (KSU), where he earned more athletic letters than any other student in the school's history; he was later inducted into the KSU Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, after college, Davey Whitney served with valor and distinction as a member of the United States Armed Forces before playing professional baseball with the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro Baseball League from 1952-1954; and

WHEREAS, after his baseball career, Coach Whitney led the men's basketball program at Burt High School and, with the triumphant high school coaching run under his belt, matriculated to further successes in collegiate basketball; and

WHEREAS, Davey Whitney made his collegiate coaching debut at Texas Southern University, where he coached for five seasons before being named the men's basketball head coach at Alcorn State University; and

WHEREAS, Coach Whitney set unprecedented records during his twenty-seven illustrious seasons at the university. With a career record at ASU of 510 wins and 301 losses, he compiled more winning seasons than any other coach in the school's history, and he was the first Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) coach to lead his team to a win in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I Basketball Tournament; and

WHEREAS, affectionately nicknamed the "Wiz," Davey Whitney led the ASU Braves to their last twelve SWAC regular season titles, with a record four consecutive titles from 1978-1982. His teams also participated in twelve national post-season tournaments during his tenure and won five district titles in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics; and

WHEREAS, in 1979, ASU became the first historically black institution to compete in the National Invitational Tournament. The Braves defeated the team from Mississippi State University at Starkville in the first round before losing in the second round to Indiana University, who went on to win the championship that year; and

WHEREAS, the Braves had a victorious comeback when they returned to the tournament in 1980, when they beat the University of South Alabama team 70-62 and became the first historically black institution to win a game in the NCAA playoffs; and

WHEREAS, under Coach Whitney's leadership, ASU made six trips to the NCAA Tournament, in 1980, 1982-1984, 1999, and 2002; and

WHEREAS, in December of 1999, Coach Whitney's career reached new heights when he became part of a select group of Division I coaches to reach the 500-win mark during their careers. Upon his retirement, he had achieved a record of 565 wins and 354 losses; and

WHEREAS, Coach Whitney is a distinguished member of the National Association of Basketball Coaches Hall of Fame, the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame, the SWAC Hall of Fame, the Alcorn State Hall of Honors, and the Alcorn State Hall of Fame and, in 2002, he became the first-ever recipient of the NCAA Hall of Champions Journey Award; and

WHEREAS, his momentous achievements aside, Davey Whitney is most proud of the love and support he shares with his wife, Bernice; their children, Gail, Danita, Lisa, Doreen, and Davey, Jr.; and their grandchildren, Ashantee and Aubrei; and

WHEREAS, the untiring dedication exhibited by Mr. Whitney in the coaching of his high school and college teams was without peer, and he taught his valuable lessons of life, sportsmanship, and fair play, lessons which abide with many of his former players to this very day; and

WHEREAS, this assembled group of state legislators is especially proud to pause in its deliberations to recognize this esteemed man and his extraordinary coaching accomplishments; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend Davey L. Whitney, head coach of the 1961 Burt High School championship basketball team, for his laudable high school and collegiate basketball career, applaud his dedication to excellence and his astounding determination to lead his teams to victory in the face of adversity, both on the basketball court

and in life, and extend to him our best wishes for every continued success in all his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.